

When a child(ren) enters out-of-home care, the whereabouts of one or both of the biological parents may be unknown. In order to achieve early permanency for the child(ren), a diligent search must be made to locate and maintain contact with both parents of the child(ren). A complete and diligent search is thoroughly **documented in the case narrative and on the CS-1** to clarify that all efforts have been made to find the parent(s).

NOTE: The definition of "diligent search" means the efforts of the Division or an entity under contract with the division to locate or identify the natural parents of a child, initiated as soon as the division is made aware of the existence of the parent, with progress reports at each court hearing until the parent is located or the court excuses further search.

Related Subject: Section 7 Glossary/Reference 566 and 568. Revised Statutes.

The following activities are to be completed by the Investigator within two working days (48 hours) of taking protective custody of the **child (ren)**.

- If caregiver is not the custodial parent (s), talk with the current caregiver about the whereabouts of the child's parent (s) and other relatives who may know the whereabouts of the child's parent(s).
- Non-custodial parent(s) whereabouts is unknown: ask the custodial parent where the other parent(s) **may be found**,
- Make a **personal** visit to the parent(s) last known address if there is reason to believe that the parent may be there. If there are multiple parents involved, make contact with all missing parents including visits to last known address unless it can be verified that the parent no longer lives there. Document what is known about the parent and what attempts have been made to locate the parent(s).
- If **the absent** parent lives a considerable distance from the worker's county office, these guidelines shall be followed:
 - Workers need not travel outside their own county, if they do not have reliable information regarding the parents. If the address is in another region and the information is reliable, the worker may request that a worker in the other region contact the parent.
 - If the **absent** parent lives in another state and the information is reliable, the worker may contact the other state for assistance in locating that parent. The worker may request a worker from the state in which the parent is residing to contact the parent by phone/and or visit them and ask the parent return a certified letter sent to their address.

A complete and diligent search also requires the following:

1. Using all known variations of the parent's name, search readily available resources, such as:
 - Production system including: Food Stamps, Temporary Assistant, Child Support, IMES, CA/N, PS, AC, Medicaid, IBTH, IDTH, etc.;
 - Telephone directory;
 - Directory assistance;
 - City directory;
2. Child's birth certificate;
3. When searching for parent(s) of abandoned newborns:
 - Call local hospitals to see if any new mothers came into the emergency room for treatment soon after the birth date of the child; and
 - If baby was abandoned in a hospital, check hospital records for leads.
4. Search agency records and make a master list of:
 - Previous phone numbers and addresses used by the parent and the dates;
 - Names with current and previous addresses and phone numbers of people and agencies who have known the client, such as relatives, friends, employers, neighbors, probation officers, doctors, schools, hospitals, and others;
 - Parent's birth date (may be obtained from the child's birth certificate), social security number and other identifying information;
5. Pursue leads developed in all efforts.
 - Make in-person and/or telephone contacts with family, friends, and neighbors at the parent's previous addresses; document results of each contact individually and specifically. Establishing good contact with these people is important in order to gain trust. Although they may not be willing to provide the parent's location, they may encourage the parent to come forward or provide other useful information in locating the parent;

- Send "certified, return receipt requested" letters to the previous addresses of individuals not contacted in person;
- Send blind copies of letters to addresses from which certified letters were returned (optional);
- Send letters of inquiry to professionals or to agencies within the community that may have had contact with the family;
- Address a letter to the parent and place in an unsealed envelope and send to the Social Security Administration, Bureau of Data Processing, Baltimore, Maryland 21232, with a request that it be forwarded to the parent. Include the Social Security number if available.
- Should identity and location of an absent parent or putative father be sought, the worker will use Parent Locate Services which maybe available upon request through Family Support Division or court.

NOTE: Family Support Division uses all parent locators systems i.e. Department of Revenue, Correction etc. Eligibility Specialist at the Children's Division has the same access to this service through Family Support. Provision of 42 U.S.C663 allow Division of Child Support Enforcement staff to provide location services to "authorized persons" to determine the whereabouts of any parent or child when the information is to be used to locate the parent or child for the purpose of :

- Enforcing any state or federal law with respect to the unlawful taking or restraint of a child or
- Making or enforcing a child custody or visitation determination.

6. Contact other agencies in Missouri and out of state that may have knowledge of the parent, including, but not limited to:

- Department of Motor Vehicles;
- Law enforcement agencies including, city, county and state;
- Department of Corrections;
- Utility companies;
- Local hospitals;
- Department of Mental Health;
- Schools, including trade schools, community colleges and universities;

- Labor unions;
 - Other social service agencies;
 - Ethnic organizations;
 - Immigration and naturalization service;
 - County tax collector.
7. Attach written responses and its envelope to copies of the original requests and file in the case record.
- File return receipts in case record;
 - Open returned letters. attach envelopes and file in case record.
8. Thoroughly document all face-to-face and telephone contacts including:
- Date;
 - Time;
 - Name of person contacted;
 - Relationship of person contacted to parent;
 - Responses, leads given;
 - Location or phone number where initial contact occurred and how person can be contacted again;
 - State information requested and verification that person was given written instructions on how to contact Children's Service Worker;
 - Any other pertinent information.